The Call of the Cumberlands

By Charles Neville Buck

With Illustrations from Photographs of Scenes in the Play

SYNOPSIS.

On Misery creek Sally Miller finds George Lescott, a landscape painter, unconscious. Jesse Purvy of the Hollman clan has been shot and Samson is suspected of the crime. Samson denies it. The shooting breaks the truce in the Hollman-South feud. Jim Hollman hunts with bloodhounds the man who shot Purvy. The bloodhounds lose the trail at Spicer South's door. Lescott discovers artistic ability in Samson. While sketching with Lescott on the mountain, Tamarack discovers Samson to a jeering crowd of mountaineers. Samson thrashes him and denounces him as the "truce-buster" who shot Purvy. At Wile McCager's dance Samson tells the South clan that he is going to leave the mountains. Lescott goes home to New York. Samson bids Spicer and Sally farewell and follows. In New York Samson studies art and learns much of city ways. Drennie Lescott persuades Wilfred Horton, her dilettante lover, to do a man's work in the world. Prompted by her love, Sally teaches herself to write. Horton throws himself into the business world and becomes well hated by predatory financiers and politicians. At a Bohemian resort Samson meets William Farbish, sporty social parasite, and Horton's enemy.

CHAPTER X—Continued.

Adrienne Lescott nodded. Her eyes were sweetly sympathetic.

"It's the hardship of the conditions," she said, softly. "Those conditions will change."

A man had come out onto the veranda from the inside, and was approaching the table. He was immaculately groomed, and came forward with the deference of approaching a throne, yet as one accustomed to approaching thrones. His smile was that of pleased surprise.

The mountaineer recognized Farbish, and, with a quick hardening of the face, he recalled their last meeting. If Farbish should presume to renew the acquaintanceship under these circumstances, Samson meant to rise from his chair, and strike him in the face. George Lescott's sister could not be subjected to such meetings. Yet, it was a tribute to his advancement in good manners that he dreaded making a scene in her presence, and, as a warning, he met Farbish's pleasant smile with a look of blank and studied lack of recognition. The circumstances out of which Farbish might weave unpleasant gossip did not occur to Samson. That they were together late in the evening, unchaperoned, at a road house whose reputation was socially dubious, was a thing he did not realize. But Farbish was keenly alive to the possibilities of the situation. He chose to construe the Kentuckian's blank expression as annoyance at being discovered, a sentiment he could readily understand. Adrienne Lescott, following her companion's eyes, looked up, and to the boy's astonishment nodded to the newcomer, and called him by name.

"Mr. Farbish," she laughed, with mock confusion and total innocence of the fact that her words might have meaning, "don't tell on us."

"I never tell things, my dear lady," said the newcomer. "I have dwelt too long in conservatories to toss pebbles. I'm afraid, Mr. South, you have forgotten me. I'm Farbish, and I had the pleasure of meeting you"—he paused a moment, then with a pointed glance added—"at the Manhattan club, was it not?"

"It was not," said Samson, promptly. Farbish looked his surprise, but was resolved to see no offense, and, after a few moments of affable and, it must be acknowledged, witty conversation, withdrew to his own table.

"Where did you meet that man?" demanded Samson, fiercely, when he and the girl were alone again.

"Oh, at any number of dinners and dances. His sort is tolerated for some reason." She paused, then, looking very directly at the Kentuckian, inquired, "And where did you meet him?"

"Didn't you hear him say the Manhattan club?"

"Yes, and I knew that he was lying."

"Yes, he was!" Samson spoke, contemptuously. "Never mind where it was. It was a place I got out of when I found out who were there."

The chauffeur came to announce that the car was ready, and they went out. Farbish watched them with a smile that had in it a trace of the sardonic.

The career of Farbish had been an interesting one in its own peculiar and unadmirable fashion. With no advantages of upbringing, he had nevertheless so cultivated the niceties of social usage that his one flaw was a too great perfection. He was letter-perfect where one to the manor born might have slurred some detail.

He was witty, handsome in his saturnine way, and had powerful friends in the world of fashion and finance. That he rendered services to his plutocratic patrons, other than the repartee of his dinner talk, was a thing vaguely hinted in club gossip, and that these services were not to his credit had more than once been conjectured.

When Horton had begun his crusade against various abuses, he had cast a suspicious eye on all matters through which he could trace the trail of William Farbish, and now, when Farbish saw Horton, he eyed him with an enigmatical expression, half-quizzical and half-malevolent.

After Adrienne and Samson had disappeared, he rejoined his companion, a stout, middle-aged gentleman of florid complexion, whose cheviot cutaway and reposeful waistcoat covered a liberal embonpoint. Farbish took his cigar from his lips, and studied its ascending smoke through lids half-closed and thoughtful.

"Singular," he mused; "very singular!"

"What's singular?" impatiently demanded his companion. "Finish, or don't start."

"That mountaineer came up here as George Lescott's protege," went on Farbish, reflectively. "He came fresh from the feud belt, and landed promptly in the police court. Now, in less than a year, he's pairing off with Adrienne Lescott—who, every one supposed, meant to marry Wilfred Horton. This little party tonight is, to put it quite mildly, a bit unconventional."

The stout gentleman said nothing, and the other questioned, musingly:

"By the way, Bradburn, has the Kenmore Shooting club requested Wilfred Horton's resignation yet?"

"Not yet. We are going to. He's not congenial, since his hand is raised against every man who owns more than two dollars." The speaker owned several million times that sum. This meeting at an out-of-the-way place had been arranged for the purpose of discussing ways and means of curbing Wilfred's crusades.

"Well, don't do it."

"Why the devil shouldn't we? We don't want anarchists in the Kenmore."

After awhile, they sat silent, Farbish smiling over the plot he had just devised, and the other man puffing with a puzzled expression at his cigar.

"That's all there is to it," summarized Mr. Farbish, succinctly. "If we can get these two men, South and Horton, together down there at the shooting lodge, under the proper conditions, they'll do the rest themselves, I think. I'll take care of South. Now, it's up to you to have Horton there at the same time."

"How do you know these men have not already met—and amicably?" demanded Mr. Bradburn.

"I happen to know it, quite by chance. It is my business to know things—quite by chance!"

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Indian summer came again to Misery, flaunting woodland banners of crimson and scarlet orange, but to Sally the season brought only heartachy remembrances of last autumn, when Samson had softened his stoicism as the haze had softened the horizon. He had sent her a few brief letters—not written, but plainly printed. He selected short words—as much like the primer as possible, for no other messages could she read. There were times in plenty when he wished to pour out to her torrents of feeling, and it was such feeling as would have carried comfort to her lonely little heart. He wished to tell frankly of what a good friend he had made, and how this friendship made him more able to realize that other feeling—his love for Sally. There was in his mind no suspicion—as yet—that these two girls might ever stand in conflict as to the right-of-way. But the letters he wished to write were not the sort he cared to have read to the girl by the evangelist-doctor or the district-school teacher, and alone she could have made nothing of them. However, "I love you" are easy words—and those he always included.

The Widow Miller had been ailing for months, and, though the local physician diagnosed the condition as being "right porely," he knew that the specter of tuberculosis which stalks through these badly lighted and ventilated houses was stretching out its fingers to touch her shrunken chest. This had meant that Sally had to forego the evening hours to study, because of the weariness that followed the day of nursing and household drudgery. Autumn seemed to bring to her mother a slight improvement, and Sally could again sometimes steal away with her slate and book, to sit alone on the big bowlder, and study.

She would not be able to write that Christmas letter. There had been too many interruptions in the self-imparted education, but some day she would write. There would probably be time enough. It would take even Samson a long while to become an artist.

One day, as she was walking homeward from her lonely trysting place, she met the battered-looking man who carried medicines in his saddlebags and the Scriptures in his pocket, and who practiced both forms of healing through the hills. The old man drew down his nag, and threw one leg over the pommel.

"Evenin', Sally," he greeted.

"Evenin', Brother Spencer. How air ye?"

"Tol'able, thank ye, Sally." The body-and-soul mender studied the girl awhile in silence, and then said bluntly:

"Ye've done broke right smart, in the last year. Anything the matter with ye?"

She shook her head, and laughed. It was an effort to laugh merrily, but the ghost of the old instinctive blitheness rippled into it.

"I've jest come from old Spicer South's," volunteered the doctor. "He's ailin' pretty consid'able, these days."

"What's the matter with Unc' Spicer?" demanded the girl, in genuine anxiety. Every one along Misery called the old man Unc' Spicer.

"I can't jest make out." Her informer spoke slowly, and his brow corrugated into something like sullenness. "He ain't jest to say sick. Thet is, his organs seems all right, but he don't 'pear to have no heart fer nothin', and his victuals don't tempt him none. He's jest puny, thet's all."

"I'll go over thar, an' see him," announced the girl. "I'll cook a chicken thet'll tempt him."

The girl spent much time after that at the house of old Spicer South, and her coming seemed to waken him into a fitful return of spirits.

"I reckon, Unc' Spicer," suggested the girl, on one of her first visits, "I'd better send fer Samson. Mebby hit mout do ye good ter see him."

The old man was weakly leaning back on his chair, and his eyes were vacantly listless; but, at the suggestion, he straightened, and the ancient fire came again to his face.

"Don't ye do hit," he exclaimed, almost fiercely. "I knows ye mean hit kindly, Sally, but don't ye meddle in my business."

"I—I didn't 'low ter meddle," faltered the girl.

"No, little gal." His voice softened at once into gentleness. "I knows ye didn't. I didn't mean ter be short-answered with ye either, but thar's jest one thing I won't 'low nobody ter do—an' thet's ter send fer Samson. He knows the road home, an', when he wants ter come, he'll find the door open, but we hain't a-goin' ter send atter him."

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Wilfred Horton found himself that fall in the position of a man whose course lies through rapids, and for the first time in his life his pleasures were giving precedence to business.

Horton was the most-hated and most-admired man in New York, but the men who hated and snubbed him were his own sort, and the men who admired him were those whom he would never meet, and who knew him only through the columns of penny papers. Powerful enemies had ceased to laugh, and begun to conspire. He must be silenced! How, was a mooted question. But, in some fashion, he must be silenced. Society had not cast him out, but society had shown him in many subtle ways that he was no longer her favorite. He had taken a plebeian stand with the masses. Meanwhile, from various sources, Horton had received warnings of actual personal danger. But at these he had laughed, and no hint of them had reached Adrienne's ears.

One evening, when business had forced the postponement of a dinner engagement with Miss Lescott, he begged her over the telephone to ride with him the following morning.

"I know you are usually asleep when I'm out and galloping," he laughed, "but you pitched me neck and crop into this hurly-burly, and I shouldn't have to lose everything. Don't have your horse brought. I want you to try out a new one of mine."

"I think," she answered, "that early morning is the best time to ride. I'll meet you at seven at the Plaza entrance."

They had turned the upper end of the reservoir before Horton drew his mount to a walk, and allowed the reins to hang. They had been galloping hard, and conversation had been impracticable.

"I suppose experience should have taught me," began Horton, slowly, "that the most asinine thing in the world is to try to lecture you, Drennie. But there are times when one must even risk your delight at one's discomfiture."

"I'm not going to tease you this morning," she answered, docilely. "I like the horse too well—and, to be frank, I like you too well!"

"Thank you," smiled Horton. "As usual, you disarm me on the verge

"Don't You Do Hit."

of combat. I had nerved myself for ridicule."

"What have I done now?" inquired the girl, with an innocence which further disarmed him.

"The queen can do no wrong. But even the queen, perhaps more particularly the queen, must give thought to what people are saying."

"What are people saying?"

"The usual unjust things that are said about women in society. You are being constantly seen with an uncouth freak who is scarcely a gentleman, however much he may be a man. And malicious tongues are wagging."

The girl stiffened.

"I won't spar with you. I know that you are alluding to Samson South, though the description is a slander. I never thought it would be necessary to say such a thing to you, Wilfred, but you are talking like a cad."

The young man flushed.

"I laid myself open to that," he said, slowly, "and I suppose I should have expected it. God knows I hate cads and snobs. Mr. South is simply, as yet, uncivilized. Otherwise, he would hardly take you, unchaperoned, to—well, let us say to ultra-bohemian resorts, where you are seen by such gossip-mongers as William Farbish."

"So, that's the specific charge, is it?"

"Yes, that's the specific charge. Mr. South may be a man of unusual talent and strength. But—he has done what no other man has done—with you. He has caused club gossip, which may easily be twisted and misconstrued."

"Do you fancy that Samson Smith could have taken me to the Wigwam road-house if I had not cared to go with him?"

The man shook his head.

"Certainly not! But the fact that you did care to go with him indicates an influence over you which is new. You have not sought the bohemian and unconventional phases of life with your other friends. There is no price under heaven I would not pay for your regard. None the less, I repeat that, at the present moment, I can see only two definitions for this mountaineer. Either he is a bounder, or else he is so densely ignorant and churlish that he is unfit to associate with you."

"I make no apologies for Mr. South," she said, "because none are needed. He is a stranger in New York, who knows nothing, and cares nothing about the conventionalities. If I chose to waive them, I think it was my right and my responsibility."

Horton said nothing, and, in a moment Adrienne Lescott's manner changed. She spoke more gently:

"Wilfred, I'm sorry you choose to take this prejudice against the boy. You could have done a great deal to help him. I wanted you to be friends."

"Thank you!" His manner was stiff. "I hardly think we'd hit it off together."

"I believe you are jealous!" she announced.

"Of course, I'm jealous," he replied, without evasion. "Possibly, I might have saved time in the first place by avowing my jealousy. I hasten now to make amends. I'm green-eyed."

She laid her gloved fingers lightly on his bridle hand.

"Don't be," she advised; "I'm not in love with him. If I were, it wouldn't matter. He has

"'A neater, sweeter maiden.

"'In a greener, cleaner land.'

He's told me all about her."

Horton shook his head, dubiously.

"I wish to the good Lord, he'd go back to her," he said.

CHAPTER XI.

One afternoon, swinging along Fifth avenue in his down-town walk, Samson met Mr. Farbish, who fell into step with him, and began to make conversation.

"By the way, South," he suggested after the commonplaces had been disposed of, "you'll pardon my little prevarication the other evening about having met you at the Manhattan club?"

"Why was it necessary?" inquired Samson, with a glance of disquieting directness.

"Possibly, it was not necessary, merely politic. Of course," he laughed, "every man knows two kinds of women. It's just as well not to discuss the nectarines with the orchids, or the orchids with the nectarines."

Samson made no response. But Farbish, meeting his eyes, felt as though he had been contemptuously rubuked. His own eyes clouded with an impulse of resentment. But it passed, as he remembered that his plans involved the necessity of winning this boy's confidence.

At the steps of a Fifth avenue club, Farbish halted.

"Won't you turn in here," he suggested, "and assuage your thirst?"

Samson declined, and walked on. But when, a day or two later, he dropped into the same club with George Lescott, Farbish joined them in the grill—without invitation.

"By the way, Lescott," said the interloper, with an easy assurance upon which the coolness of his reception had no seeming effect, "it won't be long now until ducks are flying south. Will you get off for your customary shooting?"

"I'm afraid not." Lescott's voice became more cordial, as a man's will, whose hobby has been touched. "There are several canvases to be finished for approaching exhibitions. I wish I could go. When the first cold winds begin to sweep down, I get the fever. The prospects are good, too, I understand."

"The best in years! Protection in the Canadian breeding fields is bearing fruit. Do you shoot ducks, Mr. South?" The speaker included Samson as though merely out of deference to his physical presence.

Samson shook his head. But he was listening eagerly. He too, knew that note of the migratory "honk" from high overhead.

"Samson," said Lescott slowly, as he caught the gleam in his friend's eyes, "you've been working too hard. You'll have to take a week off, and try your hand. After you've changed your method from rifle to shotgun, you'll bag your share, and you'll come back fitter for work. I must arrange it."

"As to that," suggested Farbish, in the manner of one regarding the civilities, "Mr. South can run down to the Kenmore. I'll have a card made out for him."

"Don't trouble," demurred Lescott, coolly, "I can fix that up."

"It would be a pleasure," smiled the other. "I sincerely wish I could be there at the same time, but I'm afraid that, like you, Lescott, I shall have to give business the right of way. However, when I hear that the flights are beginning, I'll call Mr. South up, and pass the news to him."

Samson had thought it rather singular that he had never met Horton at the Lescott house, though Adrienne spoke of him almost as of a member of the family. However, Samson's visits were usually in his intervals between relays of work and Horton was probably at such times in Wall street. It did not occur to the mountaineer that the other was intentionally avoiding him. He knew of Wilfred only through Adrienne's eulogistic descriptions, and, from hearsay, liked him.

The months of close application to easel and books had begun to tell on the outdoor man in a softening of muscles and a slight, though noticeable, pallor. The enthusiasm with which he attacked his daily schedule carried him far, and made his progress phenomenal, but he was spending capital of nerve and health, and George Lescott began to fear a break-down for his protege. He discussed the

"I Will Arrange So That You Will Not Run Up on Wilfred Horton."

matter with Adrienne, and the girl began to promote in the boy an interest in the duck-shooting trip—an interest which had already awakened, despite the rifleman's inherent contempt for shotguns.

"I reckon I'd like it, all right," he said, "and I'll bring back some ducks, if I'm lucky."

So, Lescott arranged the outfit, and Samson awaited the news of the coming flights.

That same evening, Farbish dropped into the studio, explaining that he had been buying a picture at Collasso's, and had taken the opportunity to stop by and hand Samson a visitor's card to the Kenmore club. He found the ground of interest fallow, and artfully sowed it with well-chosen anecdotes calculated to stimulate enthusiasm.

On leaving the studio, he paused to say:

"I'll let you know when conditions are just right." Then, he added, as though in afterthought: "And I'll arrange so that you won't run up on Wilfred Horton."

"What's the matter with Wilfred Horton?" demanded Samson, a shade curtly.

"Nothing at all," replied Farbish, with entire gravity. "Personally, I like Horton immensely. I simply thought you might find things more congenial when he wasn't among those present."

Samson was puzzled, but he did not fancy hearing from this man's lips criticisms upon friends of his friends.

"Well, I reckon," he said, coolly, "I'd like him, too."

"I beg your pardon," said the other. "I suppose you knew, or I shouldn't have mentioned the subject. I seem to have said too much."

"See here, Mr. Farbish," Samson spoke quietly, but imperatively; "if you know any reason why I shouldn't meet Mr. Wilfred Horton, I want you to tell me what it is. He is a friend of my friends. You say you've said too much. I reckon you've either said too much, or too little."

Then, very insidiously and artistically, seeming all the while reluctant and apologetic, the visitor proceeded to plant in Samson's mind an exaggerated and untrue picture of Horton's contempt for him and of Horton's resentment at the favor shown him by the Lescotts.

Samson heard him out with a face enigmatically set, and his voice was soft, as he said simply at the end:

"I'm obliged to you."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Swiss Want New National Hymn.

Switzerland is seeking a new national hymn in place of "Rufst du, Mein Vaterland," which is sung to the tune of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," and "God Save the King." It is said that there is some intention of adopting a patriotic song, beginning "Heil dir, Mein Schweizerland," but whether this is to be sung to the same tune or a new one is to be evolved for it is not yet known.

Too Long to Be Entirely Valid.

Oliver Knox read some published letters in a breach-of-promise suit, and laughed. "This idiot wrote to the girl that he would love her always," he commented. "Now I contend that 'always' is the longest word in the dictionary, and no wise man ever uses it." "No," retorted his discerning wife, "and no wise woman would believe him if he did."

Slow Delivery.

Mrs. Gotham—Who spoke at the dinner tonight, dear?

Mr. Gotham—Well, one of the speakers was the owner of that big department store."

"No wonder you're late, then."

"Why?"

"I happen to know his delivery is awfully slow."

If One's Sufficient, Why Proceed?

"A word to the wise is sufficient, and—" began the village bore.

"Then let it go at that," snarled J. Fuller Gloom, who is blessed with a mean disposition.

For many generations Perth, and not Edinburgh, was the capital of Scotland.